

PRESS ADVISORY

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Secretary of Defense William Perry will be honored in an Armed Forces Welcoming Ceremony on Friday, February 18, 1994 at 3:00 p.m. (EST) at Fort Myer Ceremonial Hall. The Joint Chiefs of Staff will host the event.

The event is open to the media. For further information, contact Public Affairs Office, US Military District Washington, 202-475-0843.

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Military Life

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Our Missions Demand Courage, Dedication and Commitment

Remarks by William J. Perry, secretary of defense, at a welcoming ceremony at Fort Myer, Va., Feb. 18, 1994.

... Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to take this oath as secretary of defense. I am proud and humbled by the opportunity President [Bill] Clinton has given me and the confidence he's placed in me. ...

Today I'm going to talk about the tremendous challenges facing the secretary of defense and what I intend to do about those challenges. I direct my comments in particular to men and women in uniform and to dedicated civilian employees of the Department of Defense.

We are in a period of change. Change means movement, movement means friction, friction means heat, and heat means conflict. The only place where there is no friction, heat or conflict is in outer space. But here on Earth there is conflict aplenty. In some regions of the Earth, conflict is a daily fact of life.

We have consigned the Cold War to history, but a new history is being written every day. It's being written in the hills of Bosnia, in the dusty streets of Somalia, in the bunkers of North Korea. And it's being written every day in Russia where the road to democracy and stability is rocky and twisted and full of uncertainties.

Diverse Problems

In short, we face a diverse set of national security problems that requires a strong, flexible and a ready military force. Today this force is made up of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen. More than 200,000 of these, as we speak, are serving overseas,

from Okinawa where I first served as a 19-year-old enlisted man in the Army to Aviano, Italy, where this weekend I will make my first visit to our troops in the field as the 19th secretary of defense.

These young men and women are standing guard for freedom. They're preserving the peace in the barren waste of the Sinai Peninsula. They are monitoring borders in the mountains of Macedonia. They are airdropping food and medicine in the isolated villages of Bosnia. They are deterring potential aggressors in Korea. They are patrolling the skies to protect Kurdish villagers from a tyrant's revenge.

These missions demand courage, dedication and commitment. These are the qualities that are the hallmark of our men and women in uniform today. All of these missions must be performed in an era of decreasing defense budgets — a decrease that's consistent with the reduced threat ... [to] the United States and our interest[s], but which indeed poses a daunting challenge to manage our assets and forces properly during the period of transition.

Historically, we have not managed defense budget declines and downsizing well at all. The rapid contraction we had after the Second World War gave us forces that just five years later were inadequate for the onset of the Korean War. The post-Vietnam drawdown gave us the infamous hollow force of the mid-1970s. After the Vietnam War, due to this hollow force, the readiness, professionalism and the morale of our fighting force were at an all-time

low.

But the young NCOs and officers who stayed in the military vowed to rebuild it. And rebuild it they did. After 15 years of hard, dedicated work, they succeeded, and that success was manifested in the Desert Storm operation. Those same young NCOs and captains and majors of the mid-'70s who vowed to rebuild the force are now the senior NCOs and officers and flag officers of the most capable, most professional military force in the world. This is the legacy that I've inherited, and I must not squander that legacy.

During the Second World War, Winston Churchill once remarked, "You can always count on Americans to do the right thing after having first exhausted all other alternatives." I hope by now we have exhausted the alternatives, the wrong ways of managing the declining in the forces, and this time we will get it right.

Provide Support

And to get it right, we must treasure the people, the men and the women of the United States armed forces. This week, I've been talking to our senior enlisted leadership. Sgt. Maj. [Richard A.] Kidd, the sergeant major of the Army, reiterated the key to maintaining the force. He told me we must provide the support and security for those who dedicate their lives to the defense of our country.

Sgt. Maj. Kidd, message received.

I accept the challenge of maintaining a strong, ready to fight,

And I pledge to lead a strong team effort of military and civilians alike to get the military strategies and options that we need.

military force in this time of dramatic change. As we face this challenge together, I see my responsibility as secretary of defense falling into six areas.

First, to give the highest priority to reviewing and assessing war plans and deployment orders. I pledge to provide the required support to our commanders in chief as they direct our forces in the field.

Second, to ensure the readiness through the oversight of the services as they train and equip our military forces. I join with President Clinton in his commitment to ensure that our forces remain the best equipped, the best trained and best prepared fighting force on the face of the Earth.

Third, to be a member of America's national security team. I owe President Clinton my best advice and counsel in finding a strategy to maneuver the difficult shoals of the post-Cold War World.

Fourth, to prepare the defense component of our national security strategy. This requires good, strong relations with our military

leadership to get their best ideas and advice. And I pledge to lead a strong team effort of military and civilians alike to get the military strategies and options that we need.

Fifth, to make the difficult resource allocation and program decisions as I prepare the annual defense budgets for approval by the president and by the Congress. I will work with the Congress and the military to make these decisions, but I will not shirk from making the tough choices we need to ensure that America has the forces ready to carry out our military strategy.

And finally, to manage our resources efficiently particularly during this difficult drawdown period. I pledge to institute innovative management techniques to foster acquisition reform and to preserve the defense industrial base that we will need in the future.

To those who stand in the ranks today and to those who you represent, these are the pledges I make today. You have committed yourselves to protecting our

nation. I commit myself to protecting you.

I'd like to close by describing a painting in the stairwell next to the office of the secretary of defense. It depicts a soldier in church praying with his family, perhaps before a deployment overseas. Below this picture is an inscription from Isaiah that says, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" The men and women in uniform have responded to the nation's call with Isaiah's words, "Here I am, send me." I owe them my best possible effort. and they shall have it.

Thank you very much.

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(photo by Chester Simpson)

Jamie Gorelick (right), general counsel to the secretary of defense, administers the Oath of Office to Secretary of Defense William J. Perry (left) as Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, looks on and Perry's wife, Lee, holds the Bible.

Perry takes oath of office at Armed Forces welcome

by Audrey L. Brunson
Pentagram staff writer

"I, William J. Perry, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter, so help me God."

With that oath during an Armed Forces full-honor review Friday at Ceremonial Hall, Perry officially accepted his duties as America's 19th secretary of defense.

Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, hosted the welcoming ceremony attended by Perry's family, congressmen and women, and high-ranking military personnel.

Pointing out Perry's past service as an enlisted soldier, DoD civilian employee and deputy secretary of defense, Shalikashvili said Perry is well qualified for the position left vacant by former Secretary of Defense Les Aspin.

"He (Perry) brings to the Office of the Secretary of Defense enormous talent and a proven record of innovation, of strategic judgment, of thoughtfulness and solid leadership," Shalikashvili said.

After inspecting the troops with Col. Stephen A. Nash, commander of troops for the ceremony, Perry told the audience that he was honored to take the oath and he knew what challenges lie ahead for America's armed forces.

"The only place where there is no friction, heat or conflict is in outer space; but here on earth, there is conflict aplenty," Perry stressed.

"We have consigned the Cold War to history, but a new history is being written everyday."

He cited the situations in Bosnia, Somalia, North Korea and Russia as examples of today's history in the making; as well as the 200,000 servicemen and women currently serving overseas.

Perry also addressed the down sizing of the nation's armed forces.

"Historically, we have not managed defense-budget declines and down sizing well at all," he said, pointing out the failures of the post-World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War drawdowns.

To avoid repeating those failures, "we must treasure the people — the men and women of the United States Armed Forces," Perry said. "... I accept the challenge of maintaining a strong, ready-to-fight military force in this time of dramatic change."

Perry said he would tackle these challenges as he defined his responsibilities in six areas:

"First, to give the highest priority to reviewing and assessing war plans and deployment orders ...

"Second, to ensure the readiness through the oversight of the services as they train and equip our military forces ... Third, to be a member of America's national security team ... Fourth, to prepare the defense component of our national-security strategy ... Fifth, to make the difficult resource allocations and program decisions as I prepare the annual defense budgets for approval by the president and by the Congress ... Finally, to manage our resources efficiently, particularly during this difficult drawdown period ...

"To those who stand in the ranks today, and those whom you represent, these are the pledges that I make," Perry continued. "You have committed yourself to protecting our nation. I commit myself to protecting you."